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ARTICLES:

- (1) Withdrawal from refueling mission in Indian Ocean today to make sharing of terrorism information difficult

Tetsuya Hioka, Yasushi Sengoku

The Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) will withdraw from its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean on Jan. 15 and put an end to operations that were part of the "war against terrorism" which continued for about eight years. While this mission has been referred to cynically as a "free gas station at sea," it has also demonstrated to a certain extent the presence of Japan, which is striving to make international contributions not only in cash, but also by providing personnel contributions. There are concerns that the termination of this operation may impact Japan's national interest.

A former MSDF chief of staff points out that as a result of the withdrawal from the Indian Ocean, Japan "will have less access to information on terrorism, and this is a great loss for its national interests."

The Ministry of Defense (MOD) has sent liaison officers to coordinate with the navies of other countries for the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and the anti-piracy operations in waters off Somalia in East Africa to Tampa, Florida, where the U.S. Middle East Command responsible for the Middle East area is located, and to Bahrain, where the headquarters of the multinational task force is located. Japan has thus been able to share terrorism-related information in the world with more than a dozen fellow countries participating in the war against terrorism, as well as Afghanistan,

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Iraq and other countries.

However, with the withdrawal, some of the liaison officers will have to be sent home. There is persistent concern in the MOD that "there might be a sharp decline in information critical for Japan's security."

The anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan started after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

For the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), whose activities are strictly constrained, the refueling mission has very little risk of being embroiled in active combat, but is highly appreciated internationally. It is a "low risk, high return" international contribution, according to a senior MSDF officer.

On the other hand, the duration of the mission, including the travel time to and from the site of operation, lasts from four to five months. Some MSDF members have been sent on this mission seven times, and it has indeed been a great burden on the MSDF. While the total cost of fuel for military vessels was about 24.4 billion yen (as of October 2009), the frequency of refueling operations has been dwindling, sometimes taking place only once a month. A MOD official says: "If you think of the cost-effectiveness..."

Ruling parties mulling alternative international contributions

Under the previous Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-New Komeito administration, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) had opposed the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean for procedural reasons, asserting that it did not have the prior approval of the Diet. However, it was not negative about the refueling mission per se, so the reason it gives for the withdrawal is "diminishing needs." The DPJ declared in its manifesto (campaign pledges) that Japan will "participate in UN peacekeeping operations and other activities and play a role in building peace." Many DPJ Diet members are positive about deploying the SDF under the framework of a UN resolution.

On the other hand, the DPJ's coalition partner Social Democratic Party (SDP) regards the refueling mission as "rear support for armed attacks (by the U.S. forces and others)" and openly demands the MSDF's withdrawal. This party asserts that international contribution should be limited to nonmilitary areas and continues to take a cautious attitude on sending the SDF overseas.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has decided on the withdrawal under such a situation in the ruling coalition. Giving priority to maintaining the coalition, he has decided to provide civilian aid totaling 5 billion dollars in five years as alternative assistance for Afghanistan in place of the refueling mission.

Former Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba, who was involved with the refueling mission under the LDP-New Komeito administration, stated in a speech in Tokyo on Jan. 9: "We were in the final stage of coordination to send CH-47 helicopters or C-130 transport planes (for the transport of supplies) in Afghanistan under the Yasuo Fukuda cabinet," revealing that in addition to the refueling mission, Japan was about to deploy the Ground and Air Self-Defense Forces in Afghanistan.

A senior MOD official says, "Even with the withdrawal, manpower contribution in Afghanistan will not be terminated." The process to

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look for ways to use the SDF will continue, taking into account the SDF's reaction.

(2) Editorial: End of refueling mission in Indian Ocean - foolish decision that will undermine national interests

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 15, 2010

The Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, which lasted for about eight years with one interruption since December 2001, ends today.

The termination of the MSDF's refueling operation means that Japan is giving up on the war on terror. Japan will also no longer be securing the safety of an essential sea-lane for Japan. It goes without saying that the Japanese government's decision not to take part in the international community's anti-terrorism operations will undermine national interests and that this is a foolish decision.

A new package of aid measures to Afghanistan, which the government drew up last November, symbolizes that foolishness. The government has decided to extend up to 5 billion dollars (approximately 450 billion yen) over five years as assistance for basic human needs, including paying the salaries of Afghan police officers, costs for vocational training to former Taliban soldiers, and support for agriculture.

The government will provide 90 billion yen annually in grants, but the aid might become handouts to the Karzai government, which has failed to eliminate corruption. However, the government has not yet disclosed the details of its aid measures. Is it possible to provide civilian assistance in Afghanistan, where the public security situation has deteriorated?

The MSDF refueling mission cost only about 7 billion yen in 2008.

From the beginning, the government excluded personnel contributions by the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) from the new aid package. It has no intention to share the costs and risks with the international community in the war on terror. It will be difficult to obtain high marks from the international community for the new aid package. It might instead draw criticism as checkbook diplomacy.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has not come up with any alternative support plans comparable to the refueling mission. When the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) was headed by Ichiro Ozawa, it asserted that the refueling mission is unconstitutional and proposed that Japan participate in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF). However, the DPJ held very few discussions on the specifics of this idea. The Afghan assistance bill that the DPJ submitted to the Diet lacked feasibility because it was premised on a cease-fire agreement or a stabilized public security situation.

The termination of the refueling mission will make it more difficult

to obtain information on the Indian Ocean region, which Japan has been securing through the refueling operation. The Japan-U.S. alliance has been undermined. We want the prime minister to consider what will be lost as a result, and then start looking into a permanent law on the overseas dispatch of the SDF.

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Meanwhile, MSDF personnel, who have put their highly specialized skills to use in steadily carrying out the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean under the scorching sun, have been highly praised and earned the confidence of the international community. We wish to express our profound esteem and deepest appreciation for their efforts.

(3) Editorial: Come up with alternative manpower contributions to replace MSDF refueling mission

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Full)
January 15, 2010

The war on terror by the international community will continue into the future over a long period of time. Japan should now seriously consider how to continue its commitment to the joint operation.

The Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, which lasted for more than eight years, is set to end today, when the antiterrorism special measures law endorsing the operation expires. That is extremely regrettable.

The MSDF refueling operation started following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. For Japan, the mission was a new international peace operation that required a new legal framework different from that for conventional UN peacekeeping operations. There was a high hurdle for Japan to clear to launch the mission both legally and operationally.

With no casualties caused among MSDF troops engaged in the refueling mission, the operation won a high appreciation in the international community and was of great significance for Japan's security policy.

The refueling operation also contributed to ensuring the safety of the vital sea lanes between Japan and the Middle East. In addition, Japan has been able to access information about international terrorism, with the MSDF enhancing its presence there and working with the naval forces of other countries on stage.

The annual cost for the refueling operation was no more than 5 to 7 billion yen. Even in the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), some point out that the mission is far more cost-effective than the financial aid of 5 billion dollars, or approximately 460 billion yen, which the government has promised to provide to Afghanistan over five years.

Why is it necessary to put an end to this significant operation? The government has yet to explain why.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has said: "The operation has not had sufficient significance in recent years;" and "there should be other ways for Japan to make contributions." But the refueling operation is a maritime interdiction operation watching out for the movement of terrorists and the trafficking of weapons and drugs. It is not direct assistance for Afghanistan.

When the DPJ was an opposition party, it claimed the refueling mission was unconstitutional. If the party decided to end the mission only in light of its compatibility with the campaign pledge, Japan's national interests will be significantly undermined.

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The war on terror is directly linked to the peace and security of Japan. The terrorist attacks on the U.S. killed 24 Japanese

nationals. Terrorists could target Japan in the future.

It is true that refueling U.S. naval ships has contributed to strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance, but the mission was initially intended for Japan to fulfill its responsibility as a member of the international community.

In Afghanistan, military troops from more than 40 countries have engaged in the task of maintaining security and helping reconstruct that country under difficult conditions, without flinching from the fact that they have sustained more than 1,500 casualties. Japan also should share the risk with these countries and offer personnel contributions.

Even if we extend only financial aid while staying in a safe place, we will not be respected, although we might receive thanks. The Hatoyama administration, which has been saying "the government will not simply extend" the refueling mission, is urged to come up with specific alternative support measures.

(4) Editorial: Government is urged to resume refueling mission in Indian Ocean

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 15, 2010

The Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Ocean will end on Jan. 15 due to the expiration of the special measures law for refueling assistance that has been serving as the basis for the MSDF mission. Foreign Minister Katusya Okada has been persistently saying that the government "will not simply extend" the refueling mission, instead of "will not extend" it. If we are to believe his statement, it is time for the Hatoyama administration to consider resuming the operation again, now that the law has expired.

The Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US became the catalyst for the U.S. to launch the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. The operation has been continuing for almost eight years from 2001 through today, although there was a time when the MSDF pulled out of the operation due to the expiration of the law.

It is most fortunate that the MSDF is able to end its mission without being involved in conflicts or sustaining any casualties. We would like to pay our respects to the MSDF personnel who have been engaging in the dangerous operations amid extreme heat.

We have been calling for the continuation of the refueling operations. The battle in Afghanistan is an effort based on international cooperation and Japan's mission has been highly praised in the international community.

Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have been suffering the loss of many soldiers in battles in Afghanistan. The refueling operation is an effective activity, which Japan can engage in within the limitations of the Japanese Constitution.

Plainly speaking, pulling out of the mission can be taken as withdrawing from international cooperation efforts. However, since the Hatoyama administration decided in November 2009 to provide

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civilian aid worth 5 billion dollars to Afghanistan over five years, it has stopped discussing the refueling mission issue. It appeared to be simply waiting for the law to expire.

To some extent, it is understandable that the DPJ, when it was an opposition party, opposed the Iraq War, based on the reasoning of domestic politics. Now that it has actually taken the reins of government, it should be possible for it to consider the issue from a different perspective. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what it did on the provisional gas tax issue. Unfortunately, however, the Hatoyama administration is showing no signs of giving such consideration to this issue.

Although U.S. President Obama was opposed to the Iraq War during the

presidential election campaign, he visited Iraq as the supreme commander of the national military forces. Secretary of State Clinton also visited Iraq. However, none of the members of the Hatoyama administration, whether it be the prime minister, the foreign minister or the defense minister, visited the site of the refueling operation. We would like the government to put an end to its current failure to think logically and start looking into resumption of the operation.

(5) Editorial: Japan-U.S. foreign ministerial talks - Solving Futenma relocation issue by May is now public pledge

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
January 14, 2010

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada agreed with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in their meeting in Hawaii to begin government-to-government talks on deepening the bilateral alliance on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Okada then informed Clinton of the Japanese government's policy of reaching a decision by May on the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

As a result, the Japanese government has pledged to the U.S. government that it will make a decision on the Futenma relocation issue by May. This means that the Hatoyama administration has sealed off its escape route of saying that the Futenma relocation was agreed on by the Liberal Democratic Party-government. In order to promote talks on the bilateral alliance, the Hatoyama government should keep its pledge to resolve the issue by May. "The Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy," said Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. U.S. President Barack Obama stated: "(The U.S.-Japan alliance) is a cornerstone not only of the two countries but also for the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region." The two leaders confirmed the importance of the bilateral alliance just two months ago.

However, bilateral relations have become strained. When the Japanese government decided to give up on its policy of reaching a conclusion by the end of 2009, Okada said, "There could be a serious loss of mutual trust in the relationship between Japan and the United States. The Japan-U.S. alliance is now being shaken." It is unusual for an incumbent foreign minister to point out that the bilateral alliance is being shaken. The U.S. government has had similar concerns, with Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell saying, "If the stalemate over the Futenma issue continues for a long period of time, the credibility of the bilateral alliance will be lost."

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There is little doubt that a sense of alarm in both governments prompted them to hold the foreign ministerial meeting this time around. Okada and Clinton also agreed to hold a meeting of the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2-plus-2) during the first half of the year, and to release a statement by the foreign and defense ministers of the two countries on the occasion of the anniversary of the revision of the security treaty (on Jan. 19). One aspect of the agreement is that it will prevent any further damage to the bilateral alliance. This action by the two nations can be taken as a "mature" response.

In connection with the talks on deepening the bilateral alliance, Okada brought up the idea of forming an accord to replace the 1996 Japan-U.S. security joint declaration. The aim of the 1996 declaration was to maintain security in the Asia-Pacific region and to reduce Japan's burden of U.S. bases. If Okada is hoping to designate the latest talks as replacing the 1996 declaration, he will have to put an end to the discord in the government. On the Futenma issue, Hatoyama said: "The ruling parties will not make a decision that ignores the U.S.'s views." However, the committee consisting of members of the government, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the People's New Party (PNP) has been looking for alternative relocation sites in place of the existing plan to relocate Futenma to the coastal area of Camp Schwab. However, Clinton told Okada that the existing plan is the best option. Efforts by both Tokyo and Washington will be required to bridge the

gap between them.

(6) At minimum, Japanese, U.S. foreign ministers sought to stabilize bilateral relations

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 14, 2010

During their recent talks, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Department of State Hillary Clinton searched for ways to stabilize bilateral relations at the very least. They each expressed their views on the Futenma airfield relocation issue, and at the end of the talks they were still far apart. However, they agreed to launch talks to deepen the alliance. That was probably a diplomatically wise decision in order to prevent the bilateral relations from being undermined any further.

Concerning the Futenma issue, the Japanese side's basic policy is to reach a conclusion in May. However, since moves in the ruling parties are complicated, the development of the matter is nowhere in sight. The U.S. side stands firm on its position that the existing Japan-U.S. alliance is the best way forward. Since no progress was expected from the talks, they did not try to reach a settlement.

This is reminiscent of the first bilateral summit between Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and President Obama in New York in September 2009. At that meeting, too, the two top leaders orchestrated a diplomatic success by only discussing issues for which it was considered possible for both sides to reach agreement, while avoiding issues, such as the refueling operation in the Indian Ocean or the Futenma issue, over which confrontation was expected.

As a result, the pending issues were effectively put off. Since then, Japan-U.S. relations have made no headway at all. On the contrary, based on the process leading up to the foreign ministerial meeting, what happened was just the opposite. Vice Foreign Minister

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Mitoji Yabunaka visited the U.S. before Clinton's departure and the meeting between Okada and Clinton was materialized in the form of Okada meeting up with her in Hawaii on her way to Oceania. This is unusual.

The U.S. agreed to Japan's request to hold a meeting. Clinton appears to have indicated the stance that the Japan-U.S. alliance transcends such individual issues as the Futenma relocation issue. It is naive for the Japanese side to view this position as a diplomatic achievement.

This is obvious when the situation is considered with the two countries' positions reversed. What if the leader of the other side said, "Trust me," and yet it failed to take any action to back up its words? It would be only natural for this side to be disappointed. Japan and the U.S., however, have controlled themselves, realizing that if they continue to lock horns, they will be hurt on an international level. The outcome of this situation was the recent foreign ministerial meeting.

The current Japan-U.S. relationship is in a state that requires damage control measures to be taken. This sort of situation does not normally happen between allies. The situation will change completely if the thorn (the Futenma issue) in the alliance is removed, as Parliamentary Defense Secretary Akihisa Nagashima put it.

Prime Minister Hatoyama is responsible for pulling out this thorn, as he is the one who pushed it deep down inside.

(7) Current situation must be correctly perceived before deepening Japan-U.S. security relations

MAINICHI (Page 10) (Full)
January 15, 2010

Yukio Okamoto, President, Okamoto Associates Inc.

The Japan-U.S. relationship can be strained with just one wrong

move. The United States has accepted the relocation of Futenma Air Station for the sake of local residents on the condition Japan provide an alternative facility. But the local residents are saying that they will not accept the Futenma relocation plan unless the airfield is moved outside Okinawa. In other words, the relocation of the facility is a Japanese domestic issue. It is lamentable that Tokyo is at loggerheads with Washington because Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama made the comment "trust me" to President Barack Obama. The two sides must come to their senses. For now, nothing can come from a pledge to deepen security relations.

The U.S. Seventh Fleet is home-ported at Yokosuka. That Japan can only lightly arm itself has been made possible by the United States' determination to continue to deploy to Japan warships and aircraft worth trillions of yen, and 50,000 troops with their 40,000 dependents. Major powers spend nearly 2 PERCENT of their GDP on defense on average, while Japan spends half that much. All together the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces total 230,000 personnel. Both Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) have larger militaries. Thanks to the U.S. nuclear deterrent, Japan does not have to arm itself with nuclear weapons despite the fact that it is surrounded by nuclear states. The U.S. deterrent also enables the Japanese to engage in a frivolous debate on prohibiting such terms as "military," "tank," and "bomber."

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The Japan-U.S. security arrangements do not constitute a special privilege "allowing the United States to station its troops in Japan." The arrangements are necessary for Japan's security. Some are saying that the United States must keep its promise to defend Japan and at the same time withdraw its Marines. If Japan asked, the United States would probably withdraw its Marines from Okinawa to Guam. The United States will not be exposed to threats as a result. The United States withdrew from the Philippines in 1992 after that country requested a hike in base fees. Since then China has taken an aggressive approach to the Spratly Islands near the Philippines. The Philippines are no longer a match for China.

The call for moving Futenma Air Station out of Japan might end up sending a message that Japan is no longer in need of security arrangements with the United States. That could encourage Japan's neighbors to intensify their activities free from anxiety. In 1992 China included the Senkaku Islands in its territory, along with the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands. Japan is the sole country in the world that has border disputes with all of its neighbors: Russia, China, South Korea, North Korea, and Taiwan. Against that background how can anyone argue that weakening the Japan-U.S. security arrangements would not be cause for alarm?

Security relations can be deepened only after those points are recognized. But that will not be easy. At present, over 40 countries deploy troops in Afghanistan. Those countries have not withdrawn from Afghanistan even though they have lost dozens of troops in battle. But the Japanese have not accepted the idea that international contribution entails a considerable number of casualties. Should Japan resort to money? If it does, Japan will be asked for a huge amount of money. But given its tight financial situation, it will be difficult for Japan to make further financial contributions. If Japan finds it difficult to make contributions in money or manpower, the country will have only a few options. The bottom line is to reduce the burden on the United States by strengthening Japan's own defense capabilities, maintain close defense cooperation, and then engage in international cooperation in a peaceful manner. China has sent more than 2,000 personnel to conduct UN peacekeeping operations, but Japan less than 40. If Japan boldly increases the number to 1,000, the international community is certain to look at Japan in a different light.

(8) Land Minister Maehara says DPJ's Ozawa should give explanation on his fund organization's land deal scandal; finance, justice ministers also comment

At a news conference held after the cabinet meeting on Jan. 15, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism Seiji Maehara commented on the problem regarding a land purchase made by Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa's fund management organization. He said: "The people are watching if the media reports are true. It is important for a politician to answer clearly questions regarding suspected wrongdoings personally," demanding that Ozawa take the responsibility of giving an explanation.

Maehara also stressed that: "The passing of large sums of money into the hands of politicians in relation with public work projects

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amounts to receiving a kickback from tax money. This is unacceptable. If the reports are not true, it is important to fulfill the responsibility of giving an explanation."

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Naoto Kan admitted that this affair may have "some" impact on Diet deliberations. Justice Minister Keiko Chiba said: "The cabinet should unite as one and work harder (so that this affair will not affect the Diet)."

ZUMWALT